

Public Advisory on West Nile Virus

This year the Mass. Dept. of Public Health will operate a toll-free West Nile Virus information number, 1-866-MASSWMN (1-866-627-7968). This line will provide callers with information on the West Nile Virus and personal protection measures, as well as information about pesticides. Health care providers should also use the line to report suspected cases of West Nile Virus. Residents should also call the number to report any dead birds. The Mass. Dept. of Public Health staff will inform the caller if the bird should be submitted for testing. If the bird is requested for submission, the caller will be instructed to safely transport it to a local repository or to call the local Animal Control Officer, at 934-6424.

Common Questions

What Is the West Nile Virus? It is a mosquito-carried virus that can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord); however, in most people the West Nile Virus infection causes no illness or mild illness.

If Bitten by a Mosquito should I be tested for WNV? No. Illnesses caused by mosquito bites are very rare. People who may be infected by mosquitoes carrying WNV will usually experience no illness or very mild illness. However, a doctor should be seen immediately if any of the following symptoms develop: high fever, severe headache, confusion, stiff neck, muscle weakness, sensitivity to light. Patients with mild symptoms usually recover completely, and do not require any specific medication or laboratory testing. Fewer than 1 percent of people infected with WNV develop serious illness.

Other Questions? Call the above phone number or visit that state's website at www.state.ma.us/dph.